

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TUNIS 05705 131928Z

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00 PA-04

RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-03 DRC-01 AID-20 OMB-01 IO-14

NIC-01 /089 W

----- 007408

R 131500Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6842

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 5705

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT TS

DTJECT: PSD 9TH CONGRESS OPENS WITH BOURGUIBA SPEECH:
LIBERAL MANIFESTO CHARACTERIZES AFFAIR AS FIXED

REF: A-123

1. SUMMARY: DESTOURIAN SOCIALIST PARTY (PSD) INQUAGURATED ITS 9TH PARTY CONVENTION (DUBBED THE "CONGRESS OF CLARITY)" ON SEPTEMBER 12 WITH A SPEECH BY PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA. THE LONG-HOUR SPEECH, DELIVERED WITH VIGOR AND DYNAMISM, EMPHASIZED THE PRESIDENT'S RESTORED HEALTH AND HSI DETERMINATION TO EXERCISE FULL CONTROL OF THE PARTY'S AND NATION'S DESTINIES. HE PROMISED TO CORRECT THE "CHICANERIES" OF THE 8TH PARTY CONGRESS HELD IN 1971 AND OUTLINED THE SERIES OF PARTY REFORMS THAT THE PRESENT CONGRESS IS EXPECTED TO APPROVE. HE REITERATED PSD COMMITMENT TO DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND REVIEWED TUNISIA'S FOREIGN RELATIONS. THE SPEECH WAS PUNCTUATED BY OCCASIONAL APPLAUSE BUT WAS NOT GREETED WITH THE THUNDEROUS OVATIONS THAT BOURGUIBA SOMETIMES ENJOYED IN THE PAST. THE CONGRESS BEGAN AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF A MANIFESTO PUBLISHED ON SEPTEMBER 11 BY PROMINENT LIBERALS WHO ATTACKED THE AFFAIR AS RIGGED. END SUMMERY.

2. CARRIED INTO THE CONGRESS HALL IN MONASTIR ON THE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TUNIS 05705 131928Z

SHOULDERS OF HIS CLAUQUE, PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA WAS GREETED

ENTHUSIASTICALLY BY 680 DELEGATES AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE PSD'S 9TH CONGRESS. WITH OPENING FORMALITIES OUT OF THE WAY, BOURGUIBA LAUNCHED INTO HIS INAUGURAL SPEECH, DISPLAYING A VIGOR AND DYNAMISM AT THE TOP OF HIS FORM. HE OPENED WITH IMPROMPTU COMMENTS POINTING OUT THAT HIS POOR HEALTH HAD PREVENTED HIM FROM DIRECTING THE WORK OF THE 8TH PSD CONGRESS IN 1971 AND THAT THIS HAD RESULTED IN ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS CONTRARY TO THE SPIRIT AND ORIENTATION OF THE PARTY. CERTAIN DELEGATES, HE SAID, HAD ALREADY BEGUN SPECULATING ABOUT HIS DEATH AND PLANNING FOR SUCCESSION. HE THEN CALLED ATTENTION OF DELEGATES TO MANIFESTO SIGNED BY SEVEN PERSONS,

WHOM HE CHARACTERIZED AS HIS ONLY OPPOSITION. WE WILL CONTINUE TO PLAN, HE PROMISED, FOR TUNISIA OF THE 21ST CENTURY WITHOUT TROUBLING OURSELVES WITH THIS MINORITY. BOURGUIBA THEN LAUNCHED INTO HIS PREPARED TEXT WHICH REITERATED HIS COMMENTS ON THE ERRORS OF THE 8TH CONGRESS AND THANKED THE ALMIGHTY THAT HIS HEALTH HAD BEEN RESTORED SO THAT HE COULD CORRECT THOSE "CHICANERIES."

3. IN THE BODY OF HIS SPEECH BOURGUIBA LISTED AND JUSTIFIED THE REFORMS OF THE PARTY WHICH THE CONGRESS IS EXPECTED TO APPROVE (SEE A-123), ALL OF WHICH WILL FURTHER STRENGTHEN THE HAND OF THE CHIEF OF STATE IN RUNNING THE PSD. HE THEN DECLARED HIS DETERMINATION "THAT THE PARTY SHOULD ALWAYS BE OPEN TO YOUTH" AND THAT ITS RANKS BE CONSTANTLY EXPANDED, BUT WARNED THAT PARTY SHOULD NOT ALLOW VIOLENT AND DESTRUCTIVE IDEAS TO ENTER. HE PROMISED THAT "WE WILL NOT RPT NOT HESITATE TO SHOW FIRMNESS" IN PREVENTING THE ENEMIES OF ORDER INSTIGATED BY FOREIGN ELEMENTS FROM DESTROYING IT. BOURGUIBA THEN ADDRESSED HIMSELF TO THE QUESTION OF PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION, DECLARING THAT HE PROPOSED RETAINING THE PRESENT SYSTEM GIVING THE PRESIDENT AUTHORITY TO DISSOLVE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, AND ADDING A PROVISION FOR POPULAR REFERENDUM TO THE CONSTITUTION. HE REITERATED THE PSD'S COMMIT-
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TUNIS 05705 131928Z

MENT TO DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND SUMMARIZED HIS ESSENTIAL POLICIES.

4. NEARING THE END OF HIS SPEECH, BOURGUIBA DISCUSSED TUNISIA'S OUTSTANDING FOREIGN AFFAIRS INTERESTS. HE DECLARED THAT TUNISIA IS NOW CAPABLE OF LIVING WITH ITS OWN RESOURCES AND IS NOT OBLIGED TO RUN TO FOREIGN ASSISTANCE, ALTHOUGH THIS ASSISTANCE IS STILL

TO BE CONSIDERED DESIRABLE TO ACCELERATE DEVELOPMENT. HE CHARACTERIZED TUNISIA'S POLICIES AS DETERMINED BY ITS ARAB-MUSLIM CULTURE AND DECLARED THAT IT WILL ALWAYS SUPPORT ARAB CAUSES. DISCUSSING TUNISIA'S NEAR NEIGHBORS, BOURGUIBA EVOKED THE COMMON INTERESTS OF THE MAGHREB STATES FROM MAURITANIA TO LIBYA, DECLARED HIS PREFERENCE THAT ANY MOVE TO STRENGTHEN THE TIES AMONG THESE STATES INCLUDE ALL OF THEM, AND AFFIRMED TUNISIA'S DETERMINATION TO PARTICIPATE IN WHATEVER WILL BRING ABOUT A GREATER ARAB MAGHREB. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT UNIFICATION REMAINS A FINAL OBJECTIVE AND A DIFFICULT-TO-REALIZE "DREAM OF YOUTH." GOING WIDER AFIELD, BOURGUIBA TOOK UP THE PALESTINE QUESTION AND STATED HIS SUPPORT FOR THE 1947 PARTITION DECISION AS A BASIS FOR SOLUTION. FINALLY, HE DISCUSSED TUNISIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN AND HIS EXPECTATION THAT THESE TIES WILL PRODUCE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND WIDER COMMERCE.

5. WHILE BOURGUIBA'S RECEPTION WAS ENTHUSIASTIC, HIS SPEECH WAS ONLY OCCASIONALLY INTERRUPTED BY LIGHT APPLAUSE. HE WAS, HOWEVER, AT THE TOP OF HIS FORM, SPEAKING LOUDLY AND FORCIBLY, AND GESTURING DRAMATICALLY AND VIGOROUSLY THROUGHOUT HIS SPEECH. HE GAVE EVERY IMPRESSION OF BEING READY TO GO ON RUNNING THE SHOW.

6. BOURGUIBA'S MENTION OF THE LIBERAL MANIFESTO, WHICH HAD BEEN PUBLISHED ON SEPTEMBER 11, WAS THE FIRST PUBLIC REVELATION OF THIS DEVELOPMENT. THE SEPTEMBER 13 PRESS DUTIFULLY TOLD THE PUBLIC WHAT THE PRESIDENT HAD BEEN TALKING ABOUT, REVEALING THE NAMES OF THE SEVEN SIGNERS, BUT DID NOT PUBLISH THE TEXT. MANIFESTO
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 TUNIS 05705 131928Z

CONSISTED OF WELL-KNOWN LIBERAL CRITICISM OF PSD LEADERSHIP FOR STIFLING DEMOCRACY IN PARTY. (WE UNDERSTAND THAT A SECOND OPPOSITIONAL TRACT IS CIRCULATING AUTHORED BY A GROUP CALLING ITSELF "PARTEI DUE FRONT POPULAIRE")

7. COMMENT: THE OPENING SESSION OF THE PSE CONGRESS GAVE EVERY IMPRESSION THAT PARTY LEADERS DID THEIR "PREPARATORY" WORK WELL AND CAN EXPECT NO PROBLEMS IN RATIFYING PLANNED CHANGES IN PARTY STATUTES. BOURGUIBA'S SPEECH CONTAINED NO REAL SURPRISES, ONLY PROMISES THAT IT WILL BE BUSINESS AS USUAL AS LONG AS HE RUNS THE PARTY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, POLITICAL PARTIES, PARTY MEETINGS, SPEECHES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 SEP 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: kelleyw0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974TUNIS05705
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740256-1170
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740945/aaaabmlu.tel
Line Count: 168
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: A-123
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: kelleyw0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 AUG 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <06 MAR 2003 by kelleyw0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PSD 9TH CONGRESS OPENS WITH BOURGUIBA SPEECH: LIBERAL MANIFESTO CHARACTERIZES AFFAIR AS FIXED
TAGS: PINT, TS, (BOURGUIBA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005